

Hazardous Manual Handling: review and revision of risk control measures

June 2017

Guidance for employers on how to review and revise risk control measures for hazardous manual handling.

As an employer, you must control the risk of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) associated with hazardous manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable. If the risk can't be eliminated, you must reduce the risk, so far as reasonably practicable by implementing risk control measures, following the hierarchy of control (see Figure 1 on page 2).

Reasonably practicable means having regards to:

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned eventuating
- the degree of harm that would result if the hazard or risk eventuated
- what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk and any ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk
- the cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk.

Once risk control measures have been implemented, employers need to make sure they are adequately controlling the risk of MSD. There are also circumstances where it is a mandatory requirement to review risk controls; these are outlined below.

When to review risk control measures

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (OHS Regulations) require risk control measures to be reviewed and, if necessary, revised in the following circumstances:

- before any alteration is made to objects or systems of work
- if new or additional information becomes available about hazardous manual handling
- if there is a report of an MSD by or on behalf of an employee
- if for any reason the current risk control measures do not adequately control the risk

- after receiving a request from a health and safety representative (HSR)
- after a notifiable incident that involves hazardous manual handling.

Many workplaces also use opportunities such as toolbox talks, near misses or injuries and the regular OHS inspections to discuss and review how risk control measures are working.

As MSDs can develop over a period of time, only looking at the task that is the subject of a report of injury doesn't always give a true reflection of the risk control measures that may require review. For example, a report of a back injury from twisting to pick up papers during an administrative task may not be the main or only cause of the injury if that person's usual work is order picking in a warehouse.

How to review risk control measures

The following method provides one way to review risk controls.

- List all the risk control measures in place for the task – involve HSRs (if any) and people who do the work. Ask the questions:
 - Can someone still get injured? Does any risk remain?
 - If an MSD has been reported - what didn't work or go to plan? Why? When? How? Under what circumstances?
 - Consider what systems are in place that are designed to ensure the risk control measures work and are reliable – did any of these not work or go to plan, were there any barriers to systems working as planned?
- Review the current risk control measures against the current state of knowledge and what is most effective – involve HSRs and people who do the work.
 - What is the current state of knowledge about this task and risk control measures?

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State of knowledge refers to what a duty holder knows or should reasonably know about the hazard or risk, and ways of eliminating or reducing the risk. This may include the following sources of information:

- OHS Act and Regulations
 - other laws that relate to the control of hazards and risks
 - WorkSafe publications (including Codes)
 - material published by other Australian OHS regulators eg Safe Work Australia Codes of Practice
 - relevant reputable technical standards eg Australian Standards
 - industry practice and publications (including trade journals)
 - industry, employer, employee and professional associations
 - supplier/trade shows
 - relevant scientific and technical literature
 - OHS professionals
 - insurers, and
 - other workplaces that do the same or similar types of work.
- Employers should review sources of information to ensure they are aware of the current state of knowledge for the task that is being reviewed and revised.
3. Review risk control measures to ensure they are the most effective. Use the table below, which outlines the hierarchy of control for controlling the risk of MSD associated with hazardous manual handling, to determine what is most effective – involve HSRs and people who do the work.

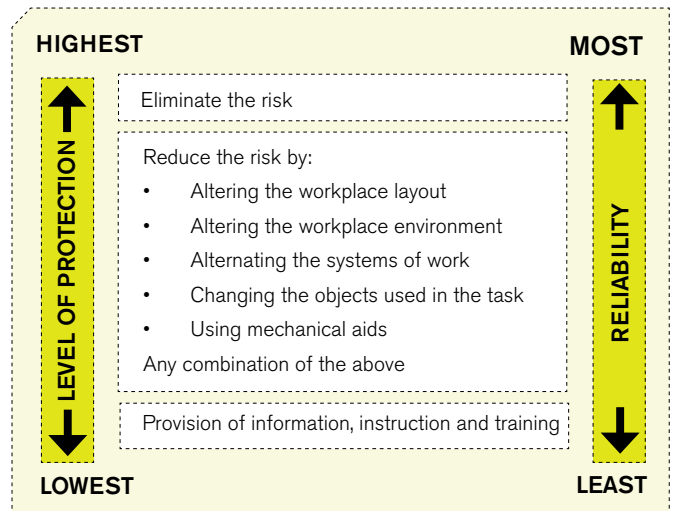


Figure 1: Effectiveness and reliability of controls

Note: A review of risk control measures that results in recommendations for more training in policies or procedures, or more supervision of employees, does not provide a higher level of protection and is likely to be ineffective. Higher order control measures are more effective than lower order controls measures.

For any proposed revisions, ask the following questions – involve the HSRs and people who do the work:

1. Do the proposed risk control measures eliminate the risk or hazard at the source?
2. Do the proposed risk control measures give employees the highest level of protection?

If the answer is 'no' to question 1 or 2, consider other options to improve the risk control measures before proceeding.

3. Is it the highest level of risk control, so far as reasonably practicable?
4. Are there any potential unintended consequences of introducing the proposed risk control measures?

If the answer is 'yes' to question 3 and 'no' to question 4, proceed to implementing the improved risk control measures.

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Consider using trials or mock-ups for the best result. Employees who have the opportunity to contribute ideas, and/or participate in trials and mock-ups are more likely to utilise the risk control measures when they are implemented.

Many suppliers will allow workplaces to trial equipment to ensure that the right equipment is purchased for the job.

How to revise risk control measures

Implement the revised risk control measures; this may be new or modified risk control measures. Involve HSRs and people who do the work.

If a more permanent solution is taking longer to implement, use interim measures in the short term.

Ensure that:

- timeframes are set for implementation
- everyone is aware of the new or modified risk control and timeframes for implementation
- once implemented, risk control measures are working as intended and that they provide the highest level of protection, so far as reasonably practicable.

Further information

Toll-free: 1800 136 089

Email: info@worksafe.vic.gov.au

For more information on occupational health and safety, go to WorkSafe's website:

worksafe.vic.gov.au

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Step 1 – list the current risk control measures in place

List the risk control measures in place (Does the risk control rely on other systems to be working, such as access, suitability, availability and maintenance of equipment, staffing levels and purchasing or replacement policies?)	Did any of the controls not work or go to plan? Why? When? How? Under what circumstances?

CONSULTATION:
Employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult with affected employees and HSRs when reviewing and revising risk control measures. Employees are likely to be able to provide information about which tasks contributed to an injury or incident and about the effectiveness of the risk control measures. Employees may also be able to provide firsthand knowledge about why the risk controls did not work as intended.

Step 2 - Review the current risk control measures against the current state of knowledge and what is most effective

Eg. What other equipment exists? What other systems are used? What do other workplaces do? (see step 2 text)

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Step 3 - Review proposed risk control measures to ensure they are the most effective

Possible new or modified controls	How does the measure control the risk?			Analysis of proposed controls	Final controls
	Eliminate the risk	Reduce risk	Administrative (instruction training, team handling, job rotation)		

CONSULTATION: Utilising mock ups or trials for proposed revisions can help identify and address any unintended consequences and/or demonstrate where any gaps still exist.

A participative approach helps ensure that any revision will work more effectively than previous risk controls, that the revised risk controls work as intended and that the risk controls are utilised by employees.

Note: A review of risk control measures that results in recommendations for more training in policies or procedures, or more supervision of employees, does not provide a higher level of protection and is likely to be ineffective. Higher order control measures are more effective than lower order control measures. A combination of risk control measures will usually be required.

Step 4 – Implement the revised risk control measures

Revised risk control measure(s)	Person responsible	Completion date	Review date	Action completed